

STARK, CAMP APPLAUD PASSAGE OF STEPHANIE TUBBS JONES GIFT OF LIFE MEDAL ACT

Wednesday, 24 September 2008

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – The U.S. House of Representatives voted overwhelmingly today (420-1) to pass the Stephanie Tubbs Jones Gift of Life Congressional Medal Act (H.R. 6950). The bill, introduced by Rep. Pete Stark (D-CA), Rep. Dave Camp (R-MI), and a bipartisan group of 44 Members of Congress, creates a commemorative medal for organ donors and their families, recognizing the brave act of organ donation.

Rep. Stark: "I am thrilled that the House passed the Gift of Life bill in honor and memory of Stephanie Tubbs Jones. This bill ensures that organ donors such as Stephanie are honored for their selfless act to give life to others. It is a fitting tribute to her lifetime of service. I hope the Senate will join us in swiftly passing the bill."

Rep. Camp: "I am grateful that our colleagues saw fit today to pass and rename the Gift of Life bill in honor Stephanie Tubbs Jones life. It is critical that we recognize the selfless acts made every day by everyday Americans. It is my hope that the Senate now quickly pass this bill."

A companion bill was introduced earlier this week by Sen. Sherrod Brown as S. 3530.

This legislation directs the Treasury department to design and produce a commemorative medal that the Department of Health and Human Services will award to organ donors or to a surviving family member. Enactment of this legislation would have no cost to the Federal Government. The medals would be funded by charitable donations.

Representative Stark's statement on the House floor is below:

"I rise today to urge passage of the 'Stephanie Tubbs Jones Gift of Life Medal Act of 2008,' and to thank the many friends colleagues and friends of Stephanie's who joined together to bring this bill to the floor.

"Stephanie's life ended as she lived it; by exemplifying concern for the welfare of others. She donated her organs in the waning hours of her life so that the lives of others could continue.

"In that spirit, this bill creates a commemorative medal for organ donors and their families, recognizing the brave and selfless act of organ donation.

"The need for organ donation is critical. Since the national transplant waiting list began, more than 80,000 donation-eligible Americans have died waiting for an organ to become available. In 2007 alone, more than 6,500 people died for lack of a suitable organ.

"As an active member of the Ways and Means Health Subcommittee, Stephanie worked tirelessly to remedy health disparities in our nation. Organ donation is one area where dramatic health disparities exist, which makes this all the more of a fitting tribute.

"While minorities donate organs in proportion to their population, the rate of organ donations fails to keep pace with the need for transplants in the population. Minority populations account for close to 50% of the people who are currently waiting for organ transplants.

"I'd like to take a moment to recognize the help of former Senate Majority Leader and transplant surgeon Dr. Bill Frist, for whom this bill was named for when it was introduced earlier this year. Dr. Frist is a tireless advocate of organ donors and their families, and worked on behalf of the Gift of Life Medal Act. I appreciate his graciousness in expressing his strong support for renaming the bill, and I would ask the Chair to have Dr. Frist's letter of support inserted into the record.

"I ask my colleagues to help bring an end to transplant waiting lists and recognize the enormous courage displayed by organ donors and their families. This bill honors these brave acts, while publicizing the critical need for increased organ donation, and pays tribute to the selflessness and memory of our colleague. Stephanie's dedication to improving health care should be permanently recognized. I urge passage of the Stephanie Tubbs Jones Gift of Life Medal Act."